



Herald Staff Photo

Woody Mead

...Inscrutable

This Guy Said, 'Fly Us to Cuba'

Woodruff (Woody) Mead, 23-year-old Miami pilot, took off on what was scheduled to be a short hop last Friday the 18th. Instead, would-be defectors forced upon him a six-day stay in Havana. Here is the imperturbable Mead's story of his adventure.

By WOODY MEAD

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It was supposed to be just a local demonstration flight, then this guy stuck a .38-caliber pistol in my neck under my right ear.

I thought it was a joke at first. We were just off Miami Beach.

He said, "Fly us to Cuba," and I saw the bullets in the chamber and I was so scared I almost jumped out.

I said something silly like, "You know it's against federal regulations to hijack a plane," then I sat up.

They said we were doing a planned flight. The big one was supposed to have been a party crasher. The other was as

David Healy of Coral Gables just did what Eastham said. They cut off the radio and I flew to the Seven Mile Bridge, then Anderson said at 210 degrees.

I got over in two hours and 20 minutes. I worried about MIGs chasing us down, but we got in OK after I followed a road to a military air base.

As I came down these big machine guns were staring at me. Just Cuban kids holding "toy" guns, except they weren't toys.

They turned all of us over to their G-2 and they accused me of being a CIA agent, the FBI, Immigration — the whole works.

They called me an American capitalist. I had 12 bucks in my pocket — and they took that away from me along with my pilot's license and ID cards.

This Healy got a little shaky. The big one was just like a rock. He was very intelligent. He spoke Spanish pretty good.

They told me they were sorry they'd gotten me into this mess. And they both said they believed in socialism; not communism, but socialism. I don't know if they were nuts or not.

For five days they kept us at G-2 in Havana. I slept on the floor and spent a lot of time staring at the wall. Then Thursday they put us in a big cell at El Principe.

That place is right out of the Middle Ages, unbelievable. No soap and just a big pot to eat from. I was there 11 hours.

Then they took us to Cuban Immigration and finally put us on a Pan Am plane. Boy, was I glad to get back.

I never did really figure out those two guys who made me fly here.

25 YEAR RE-REVIEW